

The Three Great Truths Series

No. II

The
GARMENT
OF GOD

From the Writings of
ANNIE BESANT

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THE THREE GREAT TRUTHS.

There are three truths which are absolute, and which cannot be lost, but yet may remain silent for lack of speech.

The Soul of Man is immortal, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendour has no limit.

The Principle which gives life dwells in us, and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent, is not heard or seen, or smelt, but is perceived by the man who desires perception.

Each man is his own absolute law-giver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself; the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment.

These truths, which are as great as is life itself, are as simple as the simplest mind of man.

Feed the hungry with them.

From The Idyll of the White Lotus. By Mabel Collins.

20
TRUTH the SECOND

THE principle which gives life dwells in us, and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent, is not heard or seen, or smelt, but is perceived by the man who desires perception.

— THE —
GARMENT OF GOD

*In the roaring loom of Time I ply,
And weave for God the garment thou
seest Him by.*

GOETHE.

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The GARMENT of GOD

GOD.

He is Self-existent, Infinite and Eternal, the One Life on which all lives depend, the One Existence from which all existences are drawn; "My name is He who hath shaped everything." Everything that exists is in Him; "In Him we live and move and have our being." He has been compared to an Ocean, whose billows are universes, whose spray is myriad forms; to a Fire, whence millions of sparks proceed, and every spark a Spirit; to a Tree, bearing innunerable leaves, and every leaf a life. He is vaster than space, and in Him move the uncounted myriads of stars, each one the centre of a system. He is minuter than an atom, for He is within every atom as its indwelling life. There is nothing so huge that it can over-stretch Him; there is nothing so tiny that it can escape Him. "He hath no form nor

colour, nor outline," but all forms draw their beauty from Him, all colours are portions of His white Light, all outlines are expressions of His thought. When we see the immemorial mountains, they tell of His strength; when we watch the ocean, ceaseless in movement, it speaks of His activity; the depth of primeval forests at noontide is still with His silence; the torrent, the streamlet, the song-bird, the breeze-driven branchlets, are notes in His voice; the sleek cattle knee-deep in odorous grasses, the flower-spangled meadows, the reaches of snow, the fire of the sun, the cool shade of the grove, are modes of His beauty; He speaks in the highest flights of the sweetest poesy, in the stateliness of noblest prose, in the linked melody of exquisite symphonies, and the mighty harmonies of crashing chords; He is the root and the end of the mystics aspiration, and the heroism of the martyr; He whispers in the mother crooning over her babe, throbs in the

bounding pulses of youth, smiles in the shy glances of the maiden, soothes in the gentle hand laid on an aching wound ; He reveals Himself through the prophet, the saint, and the scientist ; He is strength for the weak, shield for the defenceless, repentance in the sinner, and compassion in the righteous. He fills the worlds, but dwells in the heart of man. The heavens declare His glory, but "as one whom his mother comforteth," so does He comfort the sorrowful. He is "the Greatest, Best, Most Beautiful, Mightiest, Wisest, Best-formed, Most Exalted through Holiness, giving profusely, granting much Bliss, who created us, who prepares us, who maintains us, the Most Blissful Spirit." He is Father, Mother, Husband, Friend, to the Spirits who come forth from Him. He is "the perfect Spirit," by whom "all this is pervaded." Yet He is greater than all universes ; "I established this universe with a fragment of Myself, and I remain."

Universal Text-book of Religion.

THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD IN NATURE.

Coming forth from the depths of the One Existence, from the One beyond all thought and all speech, a Logos, by imposing on Himself a limit, circumscribing voluntarily the range of His own Being, becomes the manifested God, and tracing the limiting sphere of His activity thus outlines the area of His universe. Within that sphere the universe is born, is evolved and dies ; it lives, it moves, it has its being in Him ; its matter is His emanation ; its forces and energies are currents of His life ; He is immanent in every atom, all-pervading, all-sustaining, all-evolving. He is its source and its end, its cause and its object, its centre and circumference ; it is built on Him as its sure foundation, it breathes in Him as its encircling space ; He is in everything and everything in Him.

The Ancient Wisdom.

What is the Immanence of God? It is that in everything that lives, in a universe where all is living; there the Universal Life that is God is present, supporting and maintaining . . . and there is nothing in the whole of the mighty universe, imaging in its great immensity all that infinity of which it is an image, however imperfect; in all the systems of worlds, in suns unnumbered, in space that knows no ending, in lives that know no numbering; nothing from the very lowest grain of dust to the very Logos of a system that can exist bereft of the Life which is the root, the support of all.

The Immediate Future.

The Immanence of God . . . may I translate it for you to show you what it really means? Obviously it means that God is everywhere and in everything; but that is not enough. It means that when you walk down to the beach and see rolling in those great

billows of the ocean, that as you see them and watch them thundering on the shore, you see in them the embodied power of God, you see in them His might enshrined in the ocean waves. It means that if you go into some splendid forest, and feel the stillness and the quiet and the darkness of the forest at noontime, then you feel that stillness which is God ; and in the whole of that you come into touch with Divinity. It means that when you go to the mountains, the far Himalayas and look on their marvellous stability and their trackless reaches of spotless snow, in the mountains you see the strength and stability of God and in the snow His purity unspotted and untouchable. It means that when you look up into the sky where the astronomer sees only many worlds, you see in the space God's stillness and in the moving worlds His Life. There is nothing in the Heavens above or in the depths below, which does not whisper to you of God present at its heart, so that looking

at Nature, the garment of God, you see God within the garment as He alone exists.

Man's Life in this and Other Worlds.

Occultism teaches us that over each department in nature there presides a spiritual Intelligence ; to put the matter in a more concrete form, over our Solar System presides a mighty Being, the Logos, the manifested God of that system. He would be called the Father by the Christian, Ishvara by the Hindu, Allah by the Mohammedan. His consciousness is active at every point in His Kosmos ; His life sustains it, His power guides it, anywhere within it He is present, strong to help, mighty to save. Dimly we know that beyond Him there are yet greater ones, but for us it is easier to conceive of the power that maintains our system, to whom we are definitely related, than of the vaster Consciousness which includes myriad systems within His realm. Each Logos

is to His own universe the central object of adoration, and His radiant ministers are rightly worshipped by those who cannot rise to the conception of this central Deity.

Some Problems of Life.

Amongst the first manifestations are the manifestations of the Archangel spoken of under so many names as Michael, Gabriel, and so on From the Supreme come out these sparks of Fire which are living Intelligences, which come out from Him long before an infant humanity has been born into the world at all to build for that future humanity the Kosmos that shall be. . . . These Angels are behind every phenomenal appearance, and are the Intelligences that guide everything that we recognise as natural laws. Phenomena in Nature—what are they ? They are the outer appearances of the Angels, and the Angel is at the heart of the phenomenon : as manifestation proceeds more and

more, all those in lower grades are gradually evolved until you get a hierarchy.

The Building of the Kosmos.

God is manifested in His universe. Would you understand His work, you must develop the God within yourself, else will He for ever be veiled from your eyes.

Evolution of Life and Form.

THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD IN THE KINGDOMS.

Slowly and gradually and by prolonged meditation did God the Creator make the world. One after another living forms came forth. One after another the seeds of life were sown. . . . The life is one—one life in all. . . . The out-pouring life was involved in matter, in order to bring the seed into the matter-surrounded conditions which should make evolution possible. When we come to the first

germinating of the seed, our difficulty comes in. For we must throw ourselves in thought to the time when there were none of the conditioned faculties of the mind that we know of ; when all the life that was manifested was that which we find in the mineral kingdom, with the lowest conditions of consciousness. . . . In every one of these lowest forms in the mineral kingdom God's life is beginning to unfold. Not only is the germ of life there evolving, but He, in all His might and power, is there in every atom of His universe. His the moving power which makes evolution inevitable. His the force expanding gently the walls of matter, with immense patience and watching love, in order that they may not break under the strain. . . .

The life is to be awakened, but how ? By blows, by vibrations, the inner essence is called into activity. . . . This goes on through the mineral kingdom and the vegetable kingdom. In the vegetable kingdom the answers to vibration

caused by contact begin to show a new power of the life-sensation. . . .

We come to the next thing which is manifested as the life evolves through the animal kingdom. Pleasure and pain are now acutely felt, and a germ of recognition, connecting objects and sensations, begins; we call it "perception," . . . when that is established, mental power begins to germinate and to grow within that organism.

Dharma.

The Deity brooding over the evolving forms, continues His patient work—patient that the form may never be broken by an overstrain, but may be slowly developed into a vehicle of the life that ensouls it. In every form He lives, evolving it, but He limits with illimitable patience His manifestation of life to the poor capacities of the form, that it may grow and not be destroyed. . . . Whenever a form has reached its highest possible point, its limit of

expansion, He breaks it, in order that in a new form better adapted, the ensouling life may continue to grow ; for He knows when to break as well as when to hold ; He knows when to destroy as well as when to preserve.

Evolution of Life and Form.

Why should all things seek the Self ? Why should the Self be the goal of all endeavours ? Is it not because the Self dwells alike in the hearts of all ? Whether it be in the ocean, whether it be in a mineral or in a tree, whether in an animal or in a man, the Self there is hidden within, concealed by the outer covering of illusion. The one Self is seated alike in the sun and in the cavity of the heart, and every living creature searching after happiness is but seeking the Self ; for searching, however mistakenly, after happiness is but the blind groping after the Self which is Bliss. Yes, the Self is Bliss, eternal, unending, undying, and what we call happiness is the Self, which

is bliss reflected in broken beams through the medium which surrounds us. Let none mistake, let none be blinded by the divergences of seeking, for all are really seeking in the outer form the inner life. They seek it everywhere, in all their blind efforts after joy; and it was the Self Incarnate, Shri Krishna, who said: "Who sees seated equally in all beings, the supreme Ishvara, he seeth."

The Three Paths.

The sacrifice of the Logos lay in His voluntarily circumscribing His infinite life in order that He might manifest. . . . That sacrifice continues throughout the term of the universe, for the life of the Logos is the sole support of every separated "life," and He limits His life in each of the myriad forms to which He gives birth, bearing all the restraints and limitations implied in each form. From any one of them He could burst forth at any moment, the infinite Lord, filling the universe with His glory; but

only by sublime patience and slow and gradual expansion can each form be led upward until it becomes a self-dependent centre of boundless power like Himself. Therefore does He cabin Himself in forms, and bear all imperfections till perfection is attained, till His creature is like unto Himself and one with Him, but with its own thread of memory. Thus this pouring out of His life into forms is part of the original sacrifice and has in it the bliss of the eternal Father sending forth His offspring as separated lives, that each may evolve an identity that shall never perish.

Ancient Wisdom.

THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD IN THE UNSEEN.

The divine Life clothes itself in an immense variety of forms, and these are not confined to this, our world—a mere speck in illimitable space—nor even to those kinds of matter which we can see

with our bodily eyes. . . . It would be unreasonable to suppose that the divine Life manifests only in physical matter on our one small world. Not only are there countless inhabited worlds, but the huge realms of space, the all-penetrating ether, worlds composed of matter too subtle for our vision, are all thronged with beings sharing in the inexhaustible Life of God.

All religions have recognised the existence of superhuman Intelligence, and have called them by various names. The Hindu and the Buddhist speak of them as Devas, Shining Ones; the Hebrew, the Christian and the Musalman name them Archangels and Angels; the Zoroastrian calls them the seven Ameshaspentas (Archangels), with their hosts of subordinate ministers, including the Farohars. Most of the religions also recognise the existence of inferior Intelligences, for the greater part sub-human, and they are spoken of in the folk-lore of all nations, and in the verse

of the more imaginative poets of modern days ; many sensitive persons feel the presence of conscious life in scenes of natural beauty, and many are able to see these lesser children of nature sporting in the woods, the streams, the air ; they are called nature-spirits, elementals, fairies, genii, jinns, etc.

These Devas, or Angels, are the ministers of God, the living Intelligences ever at work through what are called "natural laws." They are the agents of the divine Mind in its ceaseless activity, for God "maketh the Angels His Messengers," . . . all draw their being and their powers from the one God. . . .

Religion bids us see in the universe not a dead machine, grinding away mechanically according to chemical and other laws ; but a living organism, in which chemical action is the result of living activities, and in which Spirit, as intelligence, guides matter, as nature, to deliberately foreseen and chosen ends.

Universal Text-book of Religion.

Stretching between the Trinity and humanity are many grades and hierarchies of invisible beings; the highest of these are the seven Spirits of God, the seven Fires, or Flames, that are before the throne of God. Each of these stands at the head of a vast host of Intelligences, all of whom share His nature and act under His direction; these are themselves graded, and are the Thrones, Powers, Princes, Dominations, Archangels, Angels of whom mention is found in the writings of the Christian Fathers. Thus there are seven great hosts of these Beings, and they represent in their intelligence the Divine Mind in Nature. They are found in all regions, and they ensoul the energies of Nature. From the standpoint of occultism there is no dead force and no dead matter. Force and matter alike are living and active, and an energy or a group of energies is the will of an Intelligence, of a Consciousness, who has that energy as his outer expression, and the matter in which that

energy moves yields a form which he guides or ensouls. Without these angelic Lives, these countless invisible Intelligences, these Consciousnesses which ensoul the force and matter which is Nature, Nature herself would not only remain unintelligible, but she would be out of relation alike to the Divine Life that moves within and around her, and to the human lives that are developing in her midst. These innumerable Angels link the worlds together . . . These Angels are the "Sons of God" of an earlier birth than ours who "shouted for joy" when the foundations of the earth were laid amid the choiring of the Morning Stars.

Other beings are below us in evolution—animals, plants, minerals and elemental lives. . . . These elemental Lives, above and below man, come into touch with human consciousness in very definite ways, and among these ways are sounds and colours . . . and in communicating with the higher Intelligences certain

sounds are useful, to create a harmonious atmosphere, suitable for their activities and to make our own subtle bodies receptive of their influences.

Esoteric Christianity.

THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD IN MAN.

The recognition of the One Self dwelling equally in all is the one sure foundation of Brotherhood. . . . To live it even to a small extent, cleanses the heart and purifies the vision ; to live it perfectly would be to eradicate all stain of separateness and to let the pure shining of the Self irradiate us, as a light through flawless glass.

The Ancient Wisdom.

You must recognise that the depth of the Spirit within you is able to reproduce the feelings of all, for God dwells within all, and there is only One Self within

which we are all rooted. So you must realize your unity with the outcast, the sinner, the criminal, the lowest and the vilest of mankind, from the standpoint of the world. For the Self is within him as much as the Self is within you, and to deny the presence of God in the basest is to blaspheme Him in His highest manifestation, in His divinest light.

Superhuman Men.

It is in your own hearts, in the depths of your own being, in the profoundest depths of your own existence, that you must seek if you would know and find the God, knowledge of Whom is Eternal Life. . . . If you once catch a glimpse of the Eternal within you, then the Eternal around you will shine out clearly before your eyes. And think what that means of strength and of splendour to every one of you who has found out by direct knowledge that God is hiding within you.

Mysticism.

We know that in the Deity Himself we see three great attributes shine out ; and if man be a portion of Him, those attributes must shine out limited, where in Him they are unlimited ; unfolding, where in Him they are perfect and complete. And as we know that one attribute of the Supreme is power, since He is the One by whom the worlds are ruled, we readily see the reflection of that in the human spirit as the will, the will that is power in man, however much for a time it be limited or undeveloped. And as we see in God that perfect self-consciousness that knows Himself completely, and all that is within Himself—so also we see in man the marvellous aspect called wisdom, wisdom that is the knowledge of the One, the realization of the divinity in man, . . . when a man is able to say, not by word, but in reality, “I am That.” And then we see God’s creative aspect reproduced in the intellect in man, the Intellect that is man’s creative faculty by which he can make all things new.

Within you lies embedded in the marble of your human life, the Spirit that is God, hidden beneath the flesh, hidden beneath the bodies, the emotion and the mind, so that it is not visible to the outer eyes. You have not to create that image. It is there. You have not to manufacture it; you have only to set it free. God is within you, waiting for manifestation, and yours the glory of hewing away all that hides that manifestation from the eager eyes of men. Your chisel is your thought; your mallet is the power of your will; take the mallet of will; take the chisel of thought; strike away the emotions of the body and the mind, until all has gone that is not He. Then out of the stone of your human life the divine statue shall arise in its perfect beauty; the splendour of the God shall shine out, so that all men shall be lighted and warmed by its splendour. God in man shall walk the earth, and you shall have had the glory of setting the God

within free to work for humanity. Be then artists in life ; be sculptors labouring in the workshop of the world ; and so when you come to pass away, you will know yourself as the Spirit eternal and not as the bodies that you leave behind ; and you will pass into a wider life, a more splendid destiny, a grander future ; for you will be free, the liberated spirit, God made manifest, the end and goal of man.

Man's Life in this and Other Worlds.

There is not one of us who may not begin to lead the truly spiritual life, and the world will be the better for the living. Every one of us, if we only think of it, each one is at work to carve his own life into a perfect image, the image of the Divine manifest in man. It is not that the Divine is not within you ; were it not so, how should you bring it forth ? The ideal comes before the manifestation, the thought creates the form, and in every one of you there is

sleeping, as it were, the Divine image, and your work is to make that image manifest, and then you are the spiritual man. . . . Wherever you may be, in whatever workshop of this great world you may find yourselves at labour, keep ever in your heart the ideal that you fain would realize. Feel the presence of the imprisoned Divinity that you have the mighty privilege, and you alone, of liberating ; and take in hand your tools, cut away the worthless stone, liberate the splendid statue, and then you shall know yourself self-consciously as that which you really are, man in the image of God.

The Spiritual Life.

THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD IN THE CHRIST.

There is one Teacher of the worlds, one Teacher of angels and of men, one mighty Instructor who reveals God to man and man to God. And that is the mighty Being whom in Christendom they

call the Christ, whom in the East they call Him whose essence is Wisdom, the Lord of Compassion, the Lord of Love.

The Immediate Future.

If you would see the Divine in its mighty perfection in a Christ, then see the Christ in your poorest fellow-man or fellow-woman and verily then you shall know Him when He comes. . . . Try to realize what He must be, the Teacher of angels and men. Try to catch some glimpse of His spirit of perfect love, some gleam of His nature of perfect purity, some understanding of a power which conquers everything. Then we who have tried to grow into His likeness . . . we with our eyes shall behold the King in His beauty, and know the Supreme Teacher when again, ere very long, He treads the roads of earth.

The Immediate Future.

This great life of God shows itself forth now in the man who has become the

Saviour, the Son, the Initiate, as a deep compassionate love for all. . . . He sends down his rays into the waiting hearts of men, and the only condition necessary for his entrance . . . is that his brother will open his heart to receive him.

Evolution of Life and Form.

In the thought of the Divine figure, the Founder of every faith, you have the fullest, the truest, the most perfect conception of that which we Theosophists call the ideal of the Master. . . . a "God-man," a man too divine to be regarded as wholly like those amongst whom He lived and moved and taught; above them and yet of them, closely bound to them by a common humanity, although raised above them by a manifestation of the God within, mightier, more complete, more compelling, than the manifestation in the ordinary men and women around Him.

London Lectures of 1907.

A mighty "Son of God" was to take flesh upon earth, a supreme Teacher, "full of grace and truth"—One in whom the Divine Wisdom abode in fullest measure, who was verily "the Word" incarnate. Light and Life in outpouring richness, a very Fountain of the Waters of Life. Lord of Compassion and of Wisdom—such was His name—and from His dwelling in the Secret Places He came forth into the world of men. . . . The man Jesus yielded himself a willing sacrifice, "offered himself without a spot" to the Lord of Love, who took unto Himself that pure form as tabernacle and dwelt therein for three years of mortal life. . . . To that manifested Presence the name of "the Christ" may rightly be given. . . . The historical Christ, then, is a glorious Being belonging to the great spiritual hierarchy that guides the spiritual evolution of humanity, who used for some three years the human body of the disciple Jesus; who was a healer of diseases and performed other

remarkable occult works ; who gathered round Him a small band of disciples whom He instructed in the deeper truths of the spiritual life ; who drew men to Him by the singular love and tenderness and the rich wisdom that breathed from His Person ; and who was finally put to death for blasphemy, for teaching the inherent Divinity of Himself and all men. He came to give a new impulse of spiritual life to the world ; to re-issue the inner teachings affecting spiritual life ; to proclaim the existence of the " Kingdom of Heaven."

Esoteric Christianity.

In order to draw out devotion, an object which is attractive must be presented to man, and we find such objects presented most completely in the revelations of the Supreme Self made through human form in the " God-Men " who appear from time to time—the Avataras or Divine Incarnations. Such beings are rendered supremely attractive by the

beauty of character they manifest, by the rays of the Self which shine through the human veil, imperfectly concealing their divine loveliness. When He who is Beauty and Love and Bliss shows a little portion of Himself on earth, encased in human form, the weary eyes of men light up, the tired hearts of men expand, with a new hope, a new vigour. They are irresistibly attracted to Him, devotion spontaneously springs up. Among Christians the intensity of religious devotion flows out to Christ, the Divine Man, regarded as an incarnation of Deity. It is His human side, His life and death, His sympathy and compassion, His gentle wisdom and patient sufferings, which stir men's hearts to a passion of devotion, as the "Man of Sorrows," the innocent and willing Sufferer, He wins perennially the love of men.

The Spiritual Life.

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